

# Using Mosquito Fish to Control Mosquito Larvae

## WHAT ARE MOSQUITO FISH AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

Mosquito Fish (*Gambusia affinis*) are one of the most effective natural methods of controlling mosquitoes. They are small (1-2 inch) freshwater fish that eat mosquito larvae. Female mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water sources. When these eggs hatch, they become mosquito larvae. Larvae can mature into adult mosquitoes in as few as 5 days. Under ideal conditions, mosquitoes can complete the cycle from egg to adult in as few as seven days. Adult female mosquitoes bite humans and animals and can spread diseases. Mosquito Fish help prevent mosquito bites and mosquito-borne illnesses. A single Mosquito Fish eats hundreds of mosquito larvae per day.



## WHERE CAN I USE MOSQUITO FISH?

Mosquito Fish are ideal for controlling mosquito larvae in backyard ponds, birdbaths, fountains, animal troughs, unused swimming pools, and other standing water sources.

## ARE THERE PLACES WHERE I SHOULD NOT PUT MOSQUITO FISH?

Mosquito fish should never be placed in any natural habitat such as lakes, streams, rivers, or creeks. They are greedy eaters, so by placing them into natural waterways, they may wipe out natural species and disrupt the ecological balance.



## HOW DO I TAKE CARE OF MOSQUITO FISH?

When you get your fish home, you should let the fish get used to their new home. Keep fish in their container and place it directly into the water for 15 minutes, or until the pond water and the container water are the same temperature. Then you may release the fish into the water. Once they are in their new home, Mosquito Fish need little or no care.

## DO I NEED TO FEED MY MOSQUITO FISH?

During the warmer months Mosquito Fish usually do not need additional feeding. However, feeding the fish is necessary if the water source is new and does not have any vegetation or has recently been cleaned. If you do need to feed the fish, give them fish food flakes. Feed them as much as they can eat within a 5-minute period.





## WHAT LIVING CONDITIONS DO MOSQUITO FISH NEED?

Mosquito Fish can tolerate water temperatures between 33° and 104°F, but prefer temperatures between 77° and 86°F. They prefer water with a pH between 6.5 and 8.0. Keep chlorine, garden insect sprays, and yard chemicals out of their water. If you must clean the pond using chemicals, transfer the Mosquito Fish to a bowl temporarily. If possible, provide rocks and vegetation for shelter from predators such as raccoons, cats, and birds.

## WHAT FISH CAN THEY LIVE WITH?

Mosquito Fish are compatible with most ornamental pond fish. They live best with fish their own size (e.g. goldfish), as larger ones may eat Mosquito Fish.

## HOW DO THEY REPRODUCE?

Mosquito Fish give birth to live young, rather than laying eggs. Each fish lives for about one year, and begins eating mosquito larvae as soon as they are born. Mosquito Fish will breed to the capacity of their environment. If you end up with too many Mosquito Fish, call the Department of Environmental Health at (858) 694-2888 or bring them to our office.

## HOW MANY FISH DO I NEED?

Small sources, such as fountains or troughs: 2-3 fish

Ponds with surface area less than 200 square feet: 3-5 fish

Larger sources: 1 fish for every 20 square feet of surface area



## WHAT DISEASES DO MOSQUITOES SPREAD?

Mosquitoes transmit diseases such as West Nile virus, St. Louis encephalitis, Western Equine encephalitis, Eastern Equine encephalitis, and malaria. Encephalitis is a brain inflammation that can cause severe headache, loss of consciousness, and even death.

## WHERE DO I GET MOSQUITO FISH?

Mosquito Fish may be picked up free of charge at over 10 locations throughout San Diego County. Please call the County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health at (858) 694-2888 for information on where to get Mosquito Fish.



**For more information on Mosquito Fish and West Nile virus, please visit our website at**  
**[www.SDFightTheBite.com](http://www.SDFightTheBite.com)**  
**or call 1-888-551-INFO.**

